This movie takes place in a small town in Iowa. There is Gilbert Gape who works in the small town grocery store and has much responsibility over his mentally handicapped brother Arnie. Arnie is awaiting his 18th birthday party. Arnie was not expected to live past his 10th birthday. Gilbert and Arnie have two sisters Ellen who is 15 years old and works at the town ice-cream shop, and Amy who is responsible for all the cooking in the home. Their mother Bonnie is a morbidly obese woman who has not left the house in over seven years.

Gilbert has an overwhelming amount of responsibility that leaves him no time for a personal life. Arnie takes up a lot of Gilbert’s time. Arnie is a sweet boy that is loved by all. Arnie is a wanderer he tends to escape and climb the water tower in the town. The police are called regularly to get Arnie to climb down safely. When Arnie climbs the water tower people in the community come out to watch, When Arnie comes down safely the community claps to celebrate.

Gilbert is responsible for bathing Arnie amongst other responsibilities. Arnie is not capable of doing this task on his own. When Gilbert begins to have a social life he leaves Arnie with the task to give himself a bath, Arnie not aware of what is being asked of him stays in the bath tub all night which creates a fear of water for Arnie.

Much stress is put on the family due to Arnie’s disability, and their mother’s obesity, there is much bickering and fighting, but through it all the family unites together when needed. Towards the end of the movie Arnie once again climbs up the water tower, this time the police does not let it slide and Arnie gets arrested. Bonnie, their mother leaves the home for the first time in seven years to get her son out of jail. There has been a lot of tension in the home which causes Gilbert to become aggressive with Arnie.

Arnie is now celebrating his 18th birthday party, may people from the community attend. Arnie’s mother makes her way up to the bedroom and request to see Arnie the “birthday boy”. When Arnie arrives to his mother’s bedside he thinks she is asleep and tries to wake her up, after numerous attempts to wake his mother he comes to the realization she was not going to wake up. The Grape’s not wanting their mother to be embarrassed being pulled out of the home by a crane; they decide to set the home on fire. In the end Gilbert and Arnie leave Iowa with Gilberts love interest Becky.

This movie focuses on Gilbert’s life and the responsibility of his brother, in this movie Arnie is portrayed as a mentally handicapped boy who can not bathe himself, he relies on his older brother to bathe him. When Arnie develops a fear of the water he goes days without taking a bath. Arnie is not fully incapable of doing for himself, Arnie’s mother and his siblings have taken care of his every need.

The people in the community are very aware of Arnie’s disability, the community responds sympathetically to Arnie each time he is brought down from the water tower. Even though it is a small town they show unbiased towards Arnie. What I did notice, the town was more interested in getting a glimpse of Bonnie Grape the mother of Arnie because she was obese. People stopped, stared, and took pictures of her, no one was ever really embarrassed about Arnie it was their mother they worried about.

One sad scene was when Arnie realized his mother has passed away, he took this really hard, but it goes to show no matter a persons handicapped, they may still be capable of understanding.